On the Relationship between a Self-Hater and the Socio-Historical Discourse: A Reading of Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*

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Introduction

Bernard Malamud's fourth novel, *The Fixer* (1966), takes place against the backdrop of Tsarist Russia in the early twentieth century, when the Russian Revolution broke out. A notable feature of this work is that Malamud blends historical fact into his writing. Malamud wrote *The Fixer* based on the case of Mendel Beilis, who was Jewish, was falsely accused of a "ritual murder" in 1913 in the context of the anti-Semitism that pervaded Russian society at that time. By modeling the work on historical fact, *The Fixer* has a rather realistic tone though Malamud's other works are basically imaginary. As a result, the socio-historical elements in the story are foregrounded, which makes *The Fixer* a work of wide scope as well.

To date, many critics have interpreted the situations in *The Fixer* as symbolic of the Holocaust. For example, Sanford Pinsker and Michael Brown have insisted that characters and episodes described in *The Fixer* represent the Holocaust. Comparing it to *The Assistant* and *God's Grace*, Kazushige Sagawa places *The Fixer* in the tradition of Holocaust literature. In a similar vein, Eileen H. Watts sees the shadows of the Holocaust in *The Fixer*, pointing out similarities between Franz Kafka's *The Trial* and Malamud's novels. However, *The Fixer* aims at criticizing the social situation in the 1960s; by describing the prison-breaking of the Jewish protagonist, Malamud shows his critical attitude toward discriminations against African-Americans in the 1960s U.S.

In an interview conducted in 1966, the year *The Fixer* was published, Malamud said, "One of the things I think of now is the Negro, the Negroes who live lives of

second-class citizens. Their story is one leading up to a situation that is revolutionary—call it Black Power if you wish" (Frankel 20). This comment shows Malamud's sympathy for the severe oppression of African-Americans circa 1966, and he also referred to the "Sacco-Vanzetti case," which led to the execution of two Italian anarchists who were completely innocent. Both incidents were caused by the expulsion movement to expel ethnic minorities from the U.S. and represented the racism spreading in American society. In this way, Malamud expressed unease about the oppression of minorities in the U.S.

The Fixer has a typical Malamudian theme: a Jew abandons his old (bad) self and acquires a new (good) self by suffering. In other words, the protagonists in Malamud's novels undergo drastic changes with moral growth as the story progresses. Like Frank Alpine in *The Assistant*, who struggles with an ethical ordeal in a grocery store, or *A New Life*'s S. Levine, who fights the corrupt system of a rural college in Cascadia, ficitional town in the U.S. Northwest, *The Fixer*'s protagonist, Yakov Bok, experiences the suffering-growth process. Thus, *The Fixer* deals with an archetypal Jew in a Malamudian sense.

The Fixer is centered on the protagonist's feelings of self-hatred, and the feelings play a special role when he transcends his old self. No other works by Malamud emphasize the protagonist's feelings of self-hatred so vividly as *The Fixer*. Yakov Bok, as a self-hater, finally performs a prison-breaking both literally and symbolically. That is, he breaks out of the prison in Kiev and overcomes the self-hatred that has preoccupied him. This article examines Yakov's self-hatred and his prison-break from the perspective of the socio-historical background in which *The Fixer* is described based on the discussion in *Jewish Self-Hatred* (1986) by Sander L. Gilman. *Jewish Self-Hatred* is a far-reaching study of self-hatred as it appears in Jewish literature. However, Gilman overlooks the works of Malamud completely, though *The Fixer* describes the protagonist's self-hatred clearly. By examining the self-hater in *The Fixer*, this article presents a new perspective on discussions of Jewish self-hatred: the relationship between the social background of the 1960's and self-hatred as a surmountable feeling, as described in *The Fixer*.

The Mechanism of Becoming a Self-Hater

In *The Fixer*, the feelings of "self-hatred" have a special role in transforming the

protagonist, the fixer, Yakov Bok. Yakov leaves the shtetl where he was born because he becomes fed up with the village's exclusive atmosphere. Then, he goes to Kiev, the Russian holy city known as "the Jerusalem of Russia" (29), seeking better opportunities for financial success. However, his ambition "to be a millionaire" (12) eventually fails, and he spends almost two-and-a-half years in prison. In his cell, Yakov agonizes over his self-hatred, but he finally succeeds in braking out of prison. This chapter deals with Yakov's feelings of self-hatred in terms of the perspective presented by Sander L. Gilman's *Jewish Self-Hatred* (1986) and clarifies how Yakov comes to feel hatred toward the Jews.

In the long history of Jewish literature, many writers have dealt with the topic of self-hatred. In his major study, *Jewish Self-Hatred*, cultural and medical historian Sander L. Gilman examines a wide-range of works by Jewish writers, from medieval Europe to the modern U.S., from Jonas Reuchlin and Mosses Mendelssohn to Saul Bellow and Philip Roth. Gilman explains how self-hatred occurs:

> Self-hatred results from outsiders' acceptance of the mirage of themselves generated by their reference group—that group in society which they see as defining them—as a reality. This acceptance provides the criteria for the myth making that is the basis of any communal identity. This illusionary definition of the self, the identification with reference group's mirage of the Other, is contaminated by the protean variables existing within what seems to the outsider to be the homogenous group in power. (2)

In the above discussion about Jewish self-hatred, it is notable that Gilman identifies the particular relationship among three groups: (born) Christians, Jewish converts to Christianity and Jews. According to his explanations, the outsiders' feelings of self-hatred reflect their reference group's illusions about their own situations as well as the outsiders'. Gilman's argument concerning the process that generates the outsider's self-hatred continues as follows. First, a reference group projects their feelings of social powerlessness, anxiety, or fear on the outsiders as the figures of "the Other." Second, the outsiders as "the Other," who fail to identify with the reference group, accept the image projected by that reference groups. Finally, they create within their own group a subgroup called "the New Other," onto which the outsiders impose the negative otherness assigned them by their reference group. Therefore, "the New Other" becomes the new target of the reference group's contempt, and they are discriminated against by both the reference group and the outsiders. It is in this

creation of "the New Other" that outsiders' feelings of self-hatred occur (Gilman 2-6).

Considering the case of *The Fixer*, the relationships among the reference groups, the outsiders, and the subgroups correspond to those among the ruling class (such as the aristocracy, the bureaucrats, and the clergy), the general populace (peasants, merchants, and laborers), and the Jews. Of course, Yakov Bok belongs to the lowest group of the three, the Jews. Yakov tries to become part of the general populace and works as a brickyard worker in Kiev, identifying with the outsiders and escaping from his position as "a New Other." However, his attempt eventually fails because of the plot hatched by his anti-Semitic co-workers and his resulting imprisonment. Locked away, Yakov hates his ethnic community, and he tries to leave them completely. Therefore, Yakov's Jewish self-hatred is equivalent to that of the Jewish converts to Christianity discussed in Gilman's *Jewish Self-Hatred*.

Significantly, Yakov's self-hatred is associated with the historical situation described in *The Fixer*. When the Russian Revolution of 1905 broke out, the Romanov Dynasty blamed the uprisings entirely on the Jews, which led to numerous pogroms throughout Russia, though in fact the tyrannical government was responsible. About the historical background to the persecution of the Jews in Russia, Julius Ostrovsky, Yakov lawyer, explains:

> After the Winter Palace massacre he [the Tsar] reluctantly gave out a ukase promising the basic freedoms. He granted a Constitution, the Imperial Duma was established, and for a short time it looked—for Russia, you understand—like the beginning of a liberal period. . . .
>
> The imperial absolutists, the rightist elements, warned the Tsar his crown was slipping. He was already regretting the concessions and began to try to cancel them. . . . As much as he could he changed back to an autocratic regime. The reactionary group—the Union of Russian People, the Society of the Archangel Michael—oppose worker and peasant movements, liberalism, socialism, any kind of reform, which also meant, naturally, the common enemy, the Jews. . . . They persecute every minority—Poles, Finns, Germans, us—but especially us. Popular discontent they divert into anti-Semitic outbreaks. It's a simple solution to their problems. (308-09)

In early twentieth-century Russia, the Jews are second-class citizens, even though they are officially endowed with the same civil rights as other minority groups. As

Ostrovsky's comments illustrate, the Jews are scapegoated as "the common enemy" by the ruling class to divert the discontent with the Romanov Dynasty. Violent acts in *The Fixer* reflect the anti-Semitic psyche in Russia. The typical cases are the boatman's abusive remarks about the Jews while sailing across the Dnieper, prisoners' violence against Yakov, or the children's attack on the old Hasid whom Yakov has sheltered.

In this society that discriminates against the Jews, Yakov feels hatred toward his people, for Yakov internalizes the social norm, that the persecutors in Russia impose on the Jews at that time. The story notes that "[I]n a philosophical moment, he cursed history, anti-Semitism, fate, and even occasionally the Jews" (155). Unable to join the general populace, Yakov falls into a state of self-hatred. Yakov cannot affirm his ethnic identity as a Jew or accept his failure to identify with the general populace. Such a double-bind aptly illustrates Yakov Bok's mindset as a self-hater.

A Social Background: The Link between Superstitions and Pseudo-Scientism

In early-twentieth century Russia, superstitions about the Jews persisted. For example, some Russian believed that the Jews had horns hidden on their head, or had use Christian blood for religious rites since medieval times. In addition, modern scientific ideas enabled the persecutors to bolster the myths about the Jews, by connecting between the old myths and the new scientific or pseudo-scientific views. Concerning this phenomenon, Gilman explains:

> From the conclusion of the nineteenth century, the idea of "race" has been given a positive as well as a negative quality. We belong to a race and our biology defines us, is as true a statement for many groups, as is the opposite: you belong to a race and your biology limits you. Race is a constructed category of social organization as much as it is a reflection of some aspects of biological reality. (*Body* 170)

As illustrated above, since the end of the nineteenth century, a racial theory has held sway in that the idea defines people in terms of (for instance) their appearance. By adopting the idea of "race," the Jews are more vulnerable to persecution, and this is true of the cases in *The Fixer*. This chapter contemplates the problem of the racial discourse brought on by the scientific age in Tsarist Russia and its influences on the

superstitious logic the persecutors use to justify discrimination against the Jews.

The reason Yakov is persecuted is simply that "he is born a Jew." Such a "meaningless" reason is openly cited by the persecutors to justify their discrimination against the Jews. In the conversation between Yakov and Grubeshov, the prosecutor, Grubeshov's words are typical: "A Jew is a Jew, and that's all there is to it. Their history and character are unchangeable. Their nature is constant" (142). According to Grubeshov, Yakov is guilty of ritual murder simply because he is a Jew. No matter how fervently Yakov proclaims his innocence, his explanation gets him nowhere. For the persecutors, there is no consideration of Yakov's personal background other than the fact that he is a Jew.

Alone in the cell, Yakov muses: "There was no 'reason,' there was only their plot against a Jew, any Jew; he was the accidental choice for the sacrifice. He would be tried because the accusation had been made, there didn't have to be another reason" (155). Yakov has been made the scapegoat without any reasonable basis except the fact that he is a "Jew." Because the persecutors' choices are arbitrary, Yakov's life is automatically replaced by the whole history of the Jews. By making Yakov a representative of the Jews, who are considered inherently evil, the persecutors justify their violence against him. As a result, Yakov's resistance in the prison is pointless, because the Russian state rereads his personal history into the general history, regardless of who is chosen to be sacrificed.

Given the untenable logic by the persecutors, the pseudo-scientific view since the nineteenth century seems to have prevailed throughout Russia. Grubeshov goes on to explain Jewish characteristics: "This has been proved in scientific studies by Gobineau, Chamberlain and others. We here in Russia are presently preparing one on Jewish facial characteristics" (142). The two figures mentioned above, Joseph Arthur de Gobineau and Houston Stewart Chamberlain, are prominent writers on racial theory in the nineteenth century. With regard to Chamberlain, Gilman illustrates says:

> . . . Chamberlain, like many of the thinkers of the late nineteenth century, stressed the centrality of racial purity. The Jews are the least pure race, the inferior product of "crossing of absolutely different types." While Chamberlain does see some value in "racial mixture" as a means of strengthening racial types, he uses the Jews as the prime example of the negative results of such interbreeding. (7)

The Jews are objectified and stigmatized by the Christians as a result of the creation of "a new myth," a racial impurity. While the Jews interbreed with a variety of ethnic groups, the Russians remain "pure" because they have sexual relationships only among themselves. The mythmaking about pure versus impure races has an effect on the persecutor's view of the persecuted.

Moreover, the term, "interbreeding," represents another superstition about the Jews: that the Jews are fertile people "in nature." They are compared with animals and declared inferior to other racial groups. This notion is exemplified in *The Fixer* by the boatman's vilifications of the Jews: "no exception made for young or old, because if you spare any they breed like rats" (28). According to the boatman, the Jews must be completely exterminated because they are a fertile species like rats and breed quickly. The superstitious beliefs differentiating the Jews from human beings are linked with the pseudo-scientific view from the nineteenth century on. On the scientific model, Gilman states:

> The abyss between the perceiver and the object in concepts of race is total. It is a complete form of distancing. Placing the Other beyond the pale by stressing an unchanging sense of self provides an image of the Other that is the antithesis of self. This chimera of Otherness is, of course, the result of projection. The need to perceive the gulf as unbridgeable underlines the closeness of the image of the Other to the image of self. Yet the power of the scientific model, which rests on the dichotomy between subject and object, between "scientist" and "specimen," forces the Other, if one is to use the paradigm of race, into an absolute position, parallel to the illusion of absolute difference implicit in the model itself. (213)

By positing "an absolute difference" between the Jews and the other groups, people begin to see the Jews as a completely strange object, the Other, in their society. Furthermore, because their positions in society are defined as "between subject and object, between 'scientist' and 'specimen,'" the difference between the Jews and the persecutors is fixed. Thus, the boatman's words comparing the Jews to the rats are based on the scientific model. This link between scientific views and superstition is what leads the discriminatory discourse against the Jews to be accepted in society.

The discourse discussed above is used in public activities such as criminal investigations by law enforcement. During a search of the cave where the body of the stabbed child was found, the priest, Father Anastasy, is summoned as a "specialist"

on the supposed crimes of the Jews. Father Anastasy believes Yakov killed the child to use Christian blood and create "the most effective therapeutic for the cure of their diseases" (132). These anti-Semitic beliefs show Father Anastasy's bigoted mindset. He goes on to say:

> There are those among us, my children, who will argue that these are superstitious tales of a past age, yet the truth of much I have revealed to you—I do not say it is all true—must be inferred from the very frequency of the accusations against the Jews. None can forever conceal the truth. If the bellman is dead the wind will toll the bell. Perhaps in this age of science we can no longer accept every statement of accusation made against this unfortunate people; however we must ask ourselves how much truth remains despite our reluctance to believe. (132)

According to Father Anastasy, "the truth" about the Jews' supposed crimes endures, even "in this age of science." In other words, even in the age of science, only religious belief can reveal the truth about conflicts between religious communities, especially those concerning the Jews. It follows from his remarks that Father Anastasy has the power to intervene and explain the given case: that is, the blood guilt toward the Christian child.

The ruling class, such as government officials or the clergy, takes advantage of the slanders against the Jews to misdirect the discontent of the general populace, mixing old superstitions with the scientific views of the time. Therefore, because the discriminatory discourse is both socially and historically constructed and incorporated into the world in which they live, the persecutors regard it as natural, and the persecuted give up resisting their enemy. The former comes to think, "Their [the Jews'] nature is constant" (142), and the latter accepts the idea that "all Jews require some Christian blood" (132).

Of course, Yakov did not commit any criminal act. However, Yakov has no choice but to think of the situation he falls into within the social structure his enemies construct as discussed above. Thus, imprisoned in the cell, he hates his people. Yakov muses: "In a philosophical moment he cursed history, anti-Semitism, fate, and even, occasionally, the Jews" (155). In another scene, Yakov thinks, "His fate nauseated him. Escaping from the Pale he had at once been entrapped in prison. From birth a black horse had followed him, a Jewish nightmare. What was being a Jew but an everlasting curse? He was sick of their history, destiny, blood guilt" (227).

Yakov considers being Jewish "an everlasting curse," which means he is followed by a "black horse" from his birthplace; in other words, Yakov lives in a nightmare world as soon as he comes into being. Thus, he harbors feelings of the self-hatred because he is trapped in the same tautology that the anti-Semites use: "The Jews are evil because they are the Jews."

In the setting of *The Fixer*, early twentieth-century Russia, the complicity between the old myth about the Jews and the pseudo-scientism since the nineteenth century disseminates a social discourse on the Jews: that is, that the Jews are and always will be "an evil Other." It has a great influence on the majority of Russian society and the country's history. The more the discourse prevails, the more marginalized the Jews are from the official history of Russia. Therefore, Yakov is caught in the structural discrimination of this social system, no matter how much he tries to escape it.

A Symbolic Self-Transcendence in Prison

In *The Fixer*, Malamud sets aside almost two-thirds of the book to describe Yakov's imprisonment in a cell and his physical and mental suffering in it. The motif of prison is the most important one for Malamud, for characters suffer a great deal in prison, and finally succeed in transforming themselves through symbolic prison-breaks. By considering the motifs of prison, this chapter discusses how Yakov overcomes his feelings of self-hatred, and transforms himself.

In Malamud's most acclaimed work, *The Assistant*, the same motif is used to address the theme of self-transcendence, or the self-transformation of the protagonist. Frank Alpine, an Italian immigrant, breaks into a grocery store with an accomplice, and robs the Jewish shopkeeper, Morris Bober. After committing this crime, Frank begins to feel guilty and work as an assistant in the shop. Frank suffers from a prison-like moral agony. However, he atones for the crime he has committed against Morris by managing the shop after Morris's death, and helping Morris's daughter, Helen, go to college. Finally, he becomes a Jew and adopts Jewish ethical standards, just like Morris Bober, and takes over his grocery store. Thus, Frank overcomes his old (bad) self and arrives at his new self (the Jew) by suffering in (a symbolic) prison.

In *The Fixer*, Yakov Bok suffers in a prison cell. At the same time, he achieves

self-transcendence in it; the prison serves as a place where he has the chance to change himself, for Yakov meets "others" in the prison and is motivated by them to seek self-transcendence. In other words, the prison provides Yakov with father figures like Morris Bober in *The Assistant*. *The Fixer* describes B. A. Bibikov, an investigating magistrate, as the father figure for Yakov in the prison.

In order to realize and transcend his self-hatred, Yakov has to re-position himself in the whole history of Europe, including Russia, which has marginalized the Jews as second-class citizens. Bibikov gives Yakov insight as to why history is important for the oppressed. In the first conversation with Bibikov, Yakov calls himself "a freethinker," explaining, "I'm not a religious man" (86). Yakov offers the same explanation of freethinkers when he talks with Rebedev, his anti-Semitic former employer at the brickyard factory.

Yakov uses the term "freethinker" because he associates himself with Baruch de Spinoza, the seventeenth century Jewish philosopher in Amsterdam who was banished from the city because the Jewish community considered him a heathen. Yakov identifies with Spinoza only in the sense that both left the Jewish community. However, Yakov misses the key to the definition to a "freethinker," and Bibikov explains it to Yakov.

Yakov explains his interpretation of Spinoza's idea of "necessity." According to Yakov, all human beings are bound to necessity. They can never escape from its power, and they do not have free will. Thus, they have no choice but to accept their fate. However, Bibikov's interpretation is different. The following exchange between Yakov and Bibikov demonstrates their totally different understandings of Spinozan "freedom":

> "That's in your [Bibikov's] thought, your honor, if your thought is in God. That's if you believed in this kind of God; that's if you reason it out. It's as though a man flies over his own head on the wings of reason, or some such thing."
>
> "He [Spinoza] also thought man was freer when he participated in the life of society than when he lived in solitude as he himself did. He thought that a free man in society had a positive interest in promoting the happiness and intellectual emancipation of his neighbors." (77-78)

"Freedom," as Yakov interprets it, can be realized only in his mind. Like fatalism, a God-like power, "necessity," binds people and determines how they live. If Yakov's

interpretation is true, there is no alternative to the given social situation, in which the Jews are victimized. Therefore, the persecuted always compromise with the persecutors. In a sense, this interpretation of "freedom" works in favor of the anti-Semites, because they can rule the Jews with ease according to a seemingly reasonable idea, "God's will." At the same time, the Jews acknowledge their fate and give up trying to change their social position.

Unlike Yakov, Bibikov thinks that a "truly" free thinker should participate in social activities. To be a free man, one has to be concerned with others. By doing so, he or she can openly associate with "the life of society." In other words, people can become free only when they contribute to others' emancipation from the state of ignorance and unhappiness. Moreover, Bibikov refers to a state (government) when he considers what a freethinker should be. Interpreting Spinoza, Bibikov comments: "He [Spinoza] perhaps felt that the purpose of the state—the government—was the security and comparative freedom of rational man" (78). In other words, in order to be true freethinkers, human beings need to concern themselves with each other in the social realm. Bibikov's altruistic view of freethinkers leads to an emphasis on the social context under which people exist. Yakov completely lacks such a view, and he learns it from Bibikov in order to think freely.

After internalizing the social norm of the persecutors, Yakov hates his people, the Jews. This also means that the social norm forces Yakov to think within the system of the history of the Russian people, which excludes the Jews. However, thanks to the insights of Bibikov, Yakov comes to think in a different way.

Yakov attempts to think freely, only to conclude, "The worst thing about such thoughts is when they leave you and you're back in the cell. The cell is your woods and sky" (214). Thus, his attempt at "free thinking" fails. At the end of the story, Ostrovsky, the lawyer, who believes "The law lives in the minds of men," repeats Bibikov's last words: "Remember—patience, calm, you have a few friends" (313). Thinking over and over again, "Why me?" (313), Yakov ponders:

> Once you leave you're out in the open; it rains and snows. It snows history, which means what happens to somebody starts in a web of events outside the personal. It starts of course before he gets there. We're all in history, that's sure, but some are more than others, Jews more than some. If it snows not everybody is out in it getting wet. He had been doused. He had to his painful surprise, stepped into history more deeply than others—it had worked out so. . . .

> Yet though his young mother and father had remained all their poor lives in the shtetl, the historical evil had galloped in to murder them there. So the "open," he thought, was anywhere. In or out, it was history that counted—the world's bad memory. It remembered the wrong things. So for a Jew it was the same wherever he went, he carried a remembered pack on his back—a condition of servitude, diminished opportunity, vulnerability. (314-15)

In this scene, Yakov realizes that his suffering is not only his personal matter but a historical one in Russia's (and Europe's) long history. Yakov's anguish during his two-and-half-year imprisonment is caused by the collective memory. As Susan Mizruchi properly puts it: "The problem of religion from the modern period, as Malamud conceives it, is a problem of memory: what we remember and what we do not, and what others choose to 'remember' about us" (478). Therefore, the scapegoating of the Jews results from "the world's bad memory." Yakov was chosen as a sacrifice not simply because he was born a Jew but because history has made the Jews the persecutors' "common enemy," as Ostrovsky puts it (308-09).

Finally, Yakov recognizes his self-hatred, which means he enters into the given social context, in which the history of the Jews is absent. In other words, Yakov tries to participate in Russian history by transcending the self that the socially and historically constructed logic of the persecutors imposed on him. The beginning of his self-transcendence is presented as follows:

> He is enraged by what has happened—is happening to him—a whole society has set itself against Yakov Bok, a poor man with a few grains of education, but in any case innocent of the crime they accuse him of. What a strange and extraordinary thing for someone like himself, a fixer by trade, who had never in his life done a thing to them but live for a few months in a forbidden district, to have as his sworn and bitter enemies the Russian State, through its officials and Tsar, for no better reason than that he was born a Jew, therefore their appointed enemy, though the truth of it is he is in his heart no one's enemy but his own.
>
> Where's reason? Where's justice? What does Spinoza say—that it's the purpose of the state to preserve a man's peace and security so he can do his day's work. To help him live out his few poor years, against circumstance, sickness, the frights of the universe. So at least don't make it any worse than it is. But the Russian State denies Yakov Bok the most elemental justice, and to show its fear

> and contempt of humankind, has chained him to the wall like an animal. . . .
>
> "I'll live," he shouts in his cell, "I'll wait, I'll come to my trial." (274-75)

In this scene, Yakov gets angry with the Russian state. Moreover, the point here is the expression "he is in his heart no one's enemy but his own." Yakov sees himself as the enemy because he has internalized the self-hatred that the history of Russia (Europe) has inculcated in him. Thus, Yakov has to be conscious of his self-hatred as a part of himself within a socio-historical context.

The decisive moment of Yakov's self-transcendence is when he is described as becoming a Jew again, for Yakov swears to protect his people, even though he was not religious at the beginning of the story. "Converting to Judaism" is the same motif as in *The Fixer*, in which Frank Alpine becomes a Jew both literally and symbolically. As if it were revelation, Yakov has the following epiphany:

> After all, he knows the people; and he believes in their right to be Jews and live in the world like men. He is against those who are against them. He will protect them to the extent that he can. This is his covenant with himself. If God's not a man he has to be. Therefore he must endure to the trial and let them confirm his innocence by their lies. He has no future but to hold on, wait it out. (274)

His thought suggests his transformation from the fixer in the shtetl to "the fixer of the world." In other words, Yakov becomes the guardian of the Jews, a position that in Judaism is associated with a God-like figure. Notably, it is in this scene that the symbolic self-transcendence in *The Assistant* is presented in a more extreme fashion. Yakov succeeds in transforming his self such that he not only overcomes his self-hatred but also wishes to "protect them [the Jews] to the extent that he can." Paradoxically, it is in the prison that Yakov meets his father figure, Bibikov, and completes his self-transcendence. The prison functions as a place where Yakov meets others and grows into a father for the Jews. In this sense, Yakov's prison-break has a double-meaning: it also represents his self-transcendence from a self-hater to a "father."

Conclusion

Suffering in prison, Yakov transcends his old self as a self-hater and assumes a new self as a father figure. At the end of the story, Yakov hallucinates about confronting Tsar, Nicholas Ⅱ, gunning him down. This imagined event shows that as a newly minted father figure, Yakov kills an evil father figure who represents the old

order in Russia. The important point is Yakov's hallucination of the act of killing; that is, Yakov is able to come to terms with his violent self only in his imagination. Therefore, it can be said that Yakov succeeds in transcending his old self symbolically.

Still, Yakov's imganied murder of the Tsar is violent. However extreme it might seem, the scene mentioned above is important because the social injustice of the 1960s require a simple breakthrough. Malamud describes Yakov's transformation under oppression as a literary solution to a social-crisis. In other words, Malamud suggests that people have the power to change the situation by launching a revolution. Thus, it is hinted at the end of the story that Yakov will fight the corrupt Russian state. Though Malamud's view of the relationship between the self and the society seems naïve from today's perspective, Yakov's transcendence of his self aptly illustrates one vision of what the self should be in the twentieth century.

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(Graduate Student)

SUMMARY

On the Relationship between a Self-Hater and the Socio-Historical Discourse: A Reading of Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer*

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Bernard Malamud's *The Fixer* describes a Jew named Yakov Bok, who left his small shtetl to come to Kiev. Yakov was falsely accused under the Tsarist regime in the early twentieth century and imprisoned -a- Many critics have described the protagonist's suffering in the prison as symbolic of the Holocaust. The Holocaust experience is indeed represented in *The Fixer*, but this article analyzes the work from a different perspective. Considering the relationship between the protagonist as a self-hater and the socio-historical discourse about the Jews, this study clarifies Yakov's self as a self-hater.

Self-hatred has often been described in Jewish literature since the Middle Ages. Sander L. Gilman examines self-hatred in his major study, *Jewish Self-Hatred* (1986). According to Gilman, self-hatred in Jewish Literature can be explained by psychology and is linked with the religious relationship between the Jews and the Christians. First, this article examines Yakov's self-hatred.

Yakov is scapegoated by the persecutors in Russia. The reason Yakov is imprisoned and suffers is untenable; Yakov suffers only because "he is a Jew." Such an unreasonable motive is rooted in the socio-historical discourse about the Jews. Myths, superstitions, and folktales in which the Jews are described as innately evil were handed down from ancient times. Notably, as the age of science emerged, these slanders were united with a pseudo-scientific discourse. As a result, violence to Yakov is justified. It is the socio-historical discourse about the Jews that is to be discussed as a second point.

Yakov transcends his self-hatred at last. When this transcendence occurs, Yakov transforms himself into a new subject. Namely, Yakov becomes a father figure. This process of his symbolic transformation is the third point to understand the protagonist's self.

After examining these points, a reconsideration of the protagonist's self in *The Fixer* helps to produce a more wide-ranging concept of self in the twentieth-century literature.